

# Proposed Framework for Bill C-284: National Vision Strategy

*Presented by Dr. Nina Ahuja, BScHons MD FRCSC (Ophthalmology) CHE, Chair of the Council on Advocacy, Canadian Ophthalmological Society, and Ms. Elisabeth Fowler, CEO, Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS), October 2024.*

## Vision Statement:

A coordinated national strategy to provide equitable access to comprehensive eye care, prioritizing the prevention and treatment of vision loss while ensuring patient safety, leveraging technology, and fostering collaboration across professions.

## Goals:

- **Universal Access:** Ensure all Canadians have access to essential eye health services, regardless of geographic or socioeconomic barriers.
- **Professional Collaboration:** Foster a cohesive framework for collaboration between ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists, and opticians (the 4 Os).
- **Public Education:** Raise awareness of vision health, including early detection and prevention of eye diseases.
- **Economic Efficiency:** Utilize human and financial resources effectively to reduce long-term healthcare costs associated with preventable vision loss.
- **Technological Integration:** Leverage AI, telemedicine, and digital tools to expand access to eye care, especially in remote areas.

## Key Components:

### 1. Role Clarity for Eye Care Professionals (4 Os):

- **Ophthalmologists:** Medical specialists in eye surgery and complex diseases.
- **Optometrists:** Primary eye care providers managing vision correction and common eye conditions.
- **Opticians:** Specialists in fitting glasses and contact lenses.
- **Orthoptists:** Experts in eye movement disorders, working alongside ophthalmologists.

## 2. Public Awareness Campaign:

- Educate Canadians on the importance of routine eye exams and the risks of major eye diseases (e.g., cataracts, glaucoma, AMD, diabetic retinopathy).
- Target vulnerable populations (Indigenous peoples, seniors, and children) with tailored prevention and early intervention messages.

## 3. Resource Optimization:

- **Human Resources:** Structure a collaborative eye care system ensuring access to specialized professionals.
- **Financial Resources:** Promote cost savings through prevention and early treatment.
- **Technology:** Expand access to care via telemedicine, particularly in underserved regions.

## 4. Research and Innovation:

- Establish a **Vision Health Desk** within the Ministry of Health, led by a Chief Vision Health Officer, to coordinate research, standardize vision screening, and oversee data collection on national eye health outcomes.

## 5. Provincial and Indigenous Collaboration:

- Adapt the national strategy to regional needs in collaboration with provinces and Indigenous health services, ensuring culturally appropriate care.

## 6. Reporting and Implementation:

- Set an 18-month reporting timeline to monitor progress on the national strategy and ensure accountability through regular government updates.

## Next Steps:

1. **Form a Multi-Stakeholder Committee** to develop the framework.
2. **Launch a Public Awareness Campaign** on eye health and early detection.
3. **Engage Provincial Leaders** to incorporate the national strategy into regional healthcare systems.